

Student Connection

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Department of City and Regional Planning (DCRP) Roundup

Daniel Brookshire

With the arrival of the Class of 2012, one of the most selective classes ever admitted to the department, DCRP students have been as active as ever. The 2010-2011 academic year was marked by strong student involvement and interactions with practitioners, both inside and outside of the classroom. Along with the speaking events, conferences, and volunteering, DCRP continues to be a highly social community with regular happy hours, potlucks, bonfires, hikes, and group runs.

NCAPA Conference

Braving a tropical storm, over twenty DCRP students and faculty attended the 2010 NCAPA Conference in New Bern in the fall. With the theme of “Plan Forward,” the conference highlighted sustainable development initiatives across the state. DCRP students had the opportunity to learn about transportation initiatives, federal policy, and economic development while networking with practicing planners from across North Carolina.

NCAPA Mentor Panel

In February 2011, DCRP packed the Di Phi Chamber in New East for the NCAPA Mentor Panel. The panel consisted of N.C. planners who shared their experiences and insights around the topic of “getting plans off the ground.” The panelists included Loryn Clark (Neighborhood and Community Services Manager, Town of Chapel Hill), Brian Horton (Transportation Planner, Charlotte DOT), Lisa Miller (Planner and Urban Designer, Durham City-County

Planning Department), and Roger Waldon (Principal, Clarion Associates). The panel was moderated by Fleming El-Amin II, NCAPA President and Transportation Planner for the City of Raleigh.

Speaking Events

This year’s lineup of speakers exposed students, faculty and guests to planning issues across North Carolina and the country. In October, students enjoyed dinner while hearing eco-entrepreneur and founder of Sustainable South Bronx, Majora Carter, speak at the 150th Anniversary of the UNC Campus Y. Carter attracted students from all of the DCRP specializations with an inspirational talk on her experiences in sustainable community and economic development.

The wealth of talent and professional backgrounds in our DCRP student community was on full display during “DCRP Speaks: Student Experiences in the Professional

Daniel Brookshire is a first-year DCRP student specializing in land use and environmental planning. Originally from Pisgah Forest, N.C., he is currently the NCAPA Student Representative.

Matt Tomasulo is a first-year DCRP student with a master’s degree in landscape architecture from N.C. State University. He was a member of the 2010 winning DCRP-NCSU team at the ULI/Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition.

Rachel Meyerson is a dual degree student in Public Administration and City and Regional Planning with a specialization in land use and environmental planning. Originally from New Jersey, she served as Co-President of DCRP’s Planners’ Forum last year.



UNC-Chapel Hill Campus Y's 150th Anniversary. First- and second-year DCRP students gather with alumni to listen to Ms. Carter's speech on sustainability and community activism in October 2010. *Image courtesy of Daniel Brookshire.*

World" this spring semester. This is the first time in many semesters where students have actively organized panels to hear from current colleagues, and it was a great success! Another highlight of the Speaker's Series was the presentation by Dr. Terry Chapin III, son of DCRP founding member F. Stuart Chapin. Dr. Chapin, a member of the National Academy of Sciences and President of the Ecological Society of America, discussed the need for more resilient and sustainable communities and his personal experience with tracking the impact of wildfires as well as practical issues of ecosystem management and governance.

The theme of disaster mitigation planning continued with Dr. Laurie Johnson, an expert in disaster recovery and risk management and technical advisor for the City and County of San Francisco. Dr. Johnson was a lead author of the recovery plan for the City of New Orleans in 2006 following Hurricane Katrina and coauthored the book, *Clear as Mud: Planning for the Rebuilding of New Orleans* in 2010. Her presentation was on "Planning after Disasters: Lessons from the Frontlines in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina."

ULI Competition

For the past two years, DCRP has made a very strong showing in the Urban Land Institute/Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition. The competition challenges graduate student teams to develop a responsible land use design plan for a real large-scale site full of challenges and opportunities. DCRP partners with architecture and landscape architecture students from N.C. State University in Raleigh. In both years, UNC-NCSU teams have placed in both the local and national

competitions – see the following piece by Matt Tomasulo to learn more about this exhausting yet invigorating experiential learning opportunity.

Community Build Day

Several DCRP students donated time and construction skills on a cold Saturday in February for DCRP's Habitat for Humanity Build Day. The build day was part of the UNC Build a Block project, a student-led initiative to build ten Habitat for Humanity houses for university and UNC hospital employees and their families. The students worked at Phoenix Place Neighborhood in the Rogers Road community in Chapel Hill.

National Conferences

Dozens of DCRP students attended two national conferences this year – the 90th Annual Transportation Research Board (TRB) Conference held in Washington, D.C., and the American Planning Association's (APA) 2011 National Planning Conference held in Boston, M.A. At TRB, students Gwen Kash and Matt Tomasulo were awarded first place in the Southeastern Transportation Center's (STC) annual poster competition. Their project and poster, "Travel Behavior and Perceived Barriers to Walking More Frequently," used data from the 2009 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), to examine the relationship between people's current travel behavior and their perceptions about walking. The pair was also invited to present their poster at UNC's University Research Day. In addition, DCRP-Environmental Engineering dual degree student Ted Mansfield received the STC Student of the Year Award.

In April, students traveled to Boston to join

professional planners and DCRP alumni for the APA National Conference. Students particularly enjoyed presentations on food systems planning, the HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities, and unique challenges for planning in coastal communities like Boston. The social highlight of the conference, and hopefully a new annual tradition, was the DCRP alumni reception, which brought together current students and alumni from across the country.

It has been a great year at DCRP, and we look forward to many more as planning students in North Carolina.

DCRP Students Take Home Top Prizes in Two National ULI Competitions

Matt Tomasulo

On April 8, 2010, five students representing the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University (NCSU) won the \$50,000 top prize in the 2010 Urban Land Institute's (ULI) national Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition. The winning redevelopment plan for the San Diego neighborhood emphasized neighborhood diversity, affordability to families of mixed incomes, and walkability. In the final round of the competition, the UNC-NCSU team bested teams from Harvard University, the University of Maryland, and the University of Pennsylvania. In 2011, another UNC-NCSU team earned one of seven national honorable mentions for their redevelopment plan of a southeast Seattle neighborhood. In the UNC-NCSU partnership's first two years of participating in the competition, planning and design students have excelled in envisioning design solutions and producing feasible development strategies, further supporting both institutions' reputations as top graduate programs in their respective fields.

The ULI/Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition was created in 2003 to encourage cooperation and teamwork – necessary talents in the planning, design and development of sustainable communities – among future land use professionals and allied professions, such as urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, real estate development, finance, and law.

Nearly 660 students comprising 132 teams from 48 universities in the U.S. and Canada applied to compete in 2010; the 2011 competition grew to over 150 entries. In 2010, students were challenged to create a design and development proposal for a 73.5 acre site in East Village in downtown San Diego. East Village, one of eight distinct neighborhoods in the city's downtown area, spans a total area of 1,450 acres bound by Interstate 5 and the San Diego Bay. Students were asked to develop a transformative vision for East Village and incorporate the highest and best sustainable use, new economic development activities, and evidence of market support for their development activities – all fused with financial justification for our planning and design decisions.

The winning proposal, called "Family Oriented Development/F.O.D.," hones in on the concept of the family as the central component necessary for catalytic redevelopment of East Village. Designed to accommodate the diverse needs of families of all sizes, ages, and economic levels, the sustainable plan incorporates many critical family-friendly elements, such as community space, connectivity, public arts, and job incubation. The winning UNC-NCSU team included Daria Khramtsova (MCRP '10), Rebecca Myers (MLA), Maria Papiez (MARCH), Jeff Pleshek (MARCH), and Matt Tomasulo (MLA, MCRP '11).

"The jury felt like the winning scheme was comprehensive in its solution and understood all the elements necessary to make things not just real, but great," said Jury Co-Chairman Bert Gregory, FAIA, LEED-AP, and president and chief executive officer of Mithun in Seattle. "Cities all across the U.S. face the issue of accommodating families with children in denser neighborhoods and it's one we need to address. This team took it on in a very brave solution."

When UNC and NCSU came together again in 2011, eight joint teams participated in the competition. This year, ULI challenged teams to create a new development plan for an approximately 33-acre site near the Mount Baker Station Area in southeast Seattle. Special development challenges included the existing use of the site for a large, successful big-box store, topographical considerations between two ridges, and the area's history as a gateway community for immigrant populations. Team 4321, including Dane Thompson (MARCH), Emily Rudkin (MARCH), Andrew Cherry (MARCH), Grayson Maughn (MLA), and Brika Eklund (MCRP '11), was awarded honorable mention for their submission titled "A New Rainier." The submission re-connects historic open spaces while targeting entrepreneurial business development to create a green and healthy transit hub for the neighborhood.

Congratulations to all UNC-NCSU teams that submitted proposals during each year's two-week competition. With the average time commitment per student at approximately 160+ hours during the competition, the departments are proud of the showing that this partnership made at the national level.

Dr. Mai Nguyen's Vietnam Workshop

Rachel Meyerson

In August 2010, nine students traveled with DCRP Professor Mai Nguyen to Quy Nhon, Vietnam to learn about its people, current and proposed urban development patterns, and ongoing planning efforts. During our stay we were hosted by the People's Committee of Quy Nhon, the executive governing body that creates and implements policy for the city.

Three U.S. universities collaborated over the past year to prepare a piece of a larger comprehensive plan for Quy Nhon: the University of Hawaii (economic



Locals riding a bike to school in Quy Nhon, Vietnam near the local fish market. *Image courtesy of Rachel Meyerson.*

development plan), Columbia University (environmental and sustainable growth land use plan), and UNC-Chapel Hill (community development plan). Students from the University of Hawaii completed their workshop in May 2010; however, our student team continued to work in partnership with Professor Jim Spencer from the University of Hawaii throughout the fall semester practicum. We also collaborated with Columbia University students as they concurrently prepared the land use plan.

DCRP students began the trip together in Ho Chi Minh City by meeting with the Sub-Institute for Urban and Rural Planning and the Ho Chi Minh Institute for Development Studies to learn more about Vietnam's government and planning processes. We then traveled to Quy Nhon where we met with Mr. Thai Ngoc Bich, Chairman of the People's Committee, as well as the Women's, Youth, and Forestry, Fishing and Agriculture Unions. Our students circulated the city and interviewed diverse populations of residents, with the help of translators, in order to assess Quy Nhon's quality of life.

We spent considerable time investigating a relocated fishermen's village in the city's Quang Trung Ward that was relocated to provide access to the waterfront for potential tourism development. While the low-income families were financially compensated for the relocation, their move from the beach has resulted in higher transportation costs for the fishermen. Among several other challenges, families who formerly did not pay for utilities and water in their homes on the beach now are financially challenged by the new monthly bills. This event and similar current development trends in Quy Nhon are promoting concerns

over the privatization of public beaches in order to cultivate a tourism industry. From our interviews, we found that residents and hotel managers are not opposed to enhancing the tourism industry. DCRP students also surveyed public beachgoers in Quy Nhon during peak afternoon hours, and we discovered that residents from around the city enjoy the beachfront. Undoubtedly, this asset contributes to Quy Nhon's unique quality of life.

During the fall semester back in Chapel Hill, our team decided to focus our efforts in two areas. One group researched how to attract greater investment to Quy Nhon's major non-tourism industries, including furniture, fishing, and agriculture. A second group of students focused on maintaining and enhancing the residents' quality of life through improved infrastructure, housing, and public spaces. From our analysis of existing data and case studies, we provided a series of recommendations to the People's Committee suggesting government actions, community involvement, law enforcement, and the implementation of sustainable practices.

The Vietnam practicum allowed DCRP students to engage collaboratively with other planning institutions, learn about international planning opportunities and challenges, and contribute to real-world, ongoing planning processes. Professor Spencer is integrating all three university plans to present to the People's Committee by summer 2011. While the Ford Foundation is no longer funding student projects, Professor Nguyen will continue to develop DCRP's relationship with Professor Spencer and planning professionals in Vietnam for future collaborations.